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STATE DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/RPM AND OES - RUDNITSKY

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TAGS: [NATO](#) [OSCI](#) [TSPL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: SCIENCE AT NATO: UPDATE ON CURRENT PROGRAMS,
REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE

REF: A. USNATO 100
 B. NATO DOCUMENT AC/328-D(2008)-REV1
 C. NATO DOCUMENT PDD(2009)0033
 D. NATO DOCUMENT AC/328-D(2009)0002 AND 0003
 E. NATO DOCUMENT AC/119-N(2008)0116
 F. NATO DOCUMENT PDD(2008)0248
 G. ROSS-LUCAS-RUDNITSKY EMAILS 11-25 NOVEMBER 2008
 H. ROSS-LUCAS EMAILS 28 NOVEMBER-19 DECEMBER 2008
 I. PDD-ROSS-VIKMANIS KELLER EMAILS 12-16 MARCH 2009
 J. ROSS-VIKMANIS KELLER EMAIL 11 FEBRUARY 2009

1. (SBU) Summary: The NATO Committee on Science for Peace and Security (SPS) will meet in Allied-only format April 23 and in NATO-Russia Council format on April 24. USNATO provides the following update on SPS projects and current U.S. actions and policy to focus and guide the interagency group in preparation for the April 23-24 meetings. USNATO further requests front-channel guidance on U.S. priorities for the Science for Peace and Security Program consistent with the United States' overall goals for the NATO Alliance. Please see action items in Paras 5, 7, 9, 11 and 14. End summary.

2. (U) Background: The SPS Committee meeting on April 23 will bring national science representatives from the 28 Allies to Brussels to discuss SPS priorities, the 2009 budget and work program, and current and planned projects including Stand-Off Detection of Explosives and the Virtual Silk Highway, as well as any outstanding issues. A meeting of the NATO-Russia Council SPS Committee will take place on April 24. SPS meetings at the representative level occur two-to-three times per year. The last meeting took place in November 2008 and the next is tentatively scheduled for June 2009. Between these meetings, the SPS Liaison Group including representatives from national delegations to NATO, meets regularly to manage the ongoing work of SPS and its science initiatives. At NATO, science programs are facilitated by the SPS Section of the Public Diplomacy Division (PDD).

3. (U) Budget: PDD intends to release a revised draft of its 2009 budget before the April 23 meeting. The approved budget is 10,850,000 Euros, including the one million "additional" Euros approved by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) that has yet to be allocated to specific projects. This represents a cut from the 2008 budget of 13.3 million Euro, a cut supported by the U.S. Science is the largest part of the non-discretionary civil budget, which is facing a 70 million Euro shortfall over the next five years (ref A). As a result, significant savings in SPS future programs must be found. USNATO believes that the April 23 meeting should be used to lay down a marker on this issue.

4. (U) Work Program: PDD may release a revised draft of the

2009 Work Program before the April 23 meeting. The original draft work program released in November 2008 sparked requests from many Allies for further information on projects and the planned "intensive exercise to define the SPS Program's future directions... and develop and implement a public information approach." As instructed, USNATO also called for a realignment of SPS priorities with the overall priorities of NATO and a greater emphasis on public diplomacy within the overall program and any project proposals. As a result, PDD contracted consultants McKinsey and Company to conduct a "pre-diagnostic" review of the SPS program, structure and priorities (see Para 6). This review has led to an improved work program, however we have again asked for an emphasis on public diplomacy.

15. (U) Action request: The interagency group should review the latest draft work program draft (ref B) and present comments to the Committee at the April 23 meeting. A final work program will need to be approved by the Committee.

16. (U) McKinsey "Pre-Diagnostic" Review: In an effort to gauge support for science programs within NATO, the effectiveness of SPS programs, and Allies' interpretation of Science priorities, PDD engaged McKinsey and Company in late 2008. McKinsey interviewed representatives from several Allies, including the U.S., UK, Italy and Turkey, as well as members of NATO's International Staff and the international community, and produced an initial report highlighting common priorities and possible future steps for SPS. This will be presented more fully on April 23, however a preview given to the Liaison Group on April 14 indicates a positive step

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toward clearly defining SPS priorities tied to NATO's overall priorities, and an important recognition of the relationship between science, public diplomacy and NATO partnership activities. As noted above, the Liaison Group asked that this be reflected in the Work Program. The SPS Committee may be asked to discuss the McKinsey findings and decide whether to proceed with a full SPS review. (PDD has promised a document to guide this discussion, which will be forwarded as soon as received.)

17. (U) Action request: In order to move ahead with defining NATO Science priorities, the interagency group should define and articulate to the Committee our national priorities for science consistent with U.S. national priorities for NATO as a whole.

18. (U) Stand-Off Detection of Explosives: The SPS Committee has agreed that the "Stand-Off Detection of Suicide Bombers and Mobile Objects," a project bringing together scientists from NATO, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Russia, addresses a major threat to modern society. The initial stages of the project were ready to be launched in November 2008, however PDD approved only 2.3 million Euro of the 4.3 million Euro budget. In the March and November 2008 SPS Committee meetings, the U.S. Representative suggested this program could best be funded through national contributions. In late 2008, the United Kingdom requested full funding from national contributions be obtained prior to the start of the project (ref C). NATO asked for national commitments to be submitted by 15 March; to date, only France has made a firm commitment of 600,000 Euros. On 14 April, Turkey hinted at a 50,000 Euro commitment, leaving a shortfall of 1.35 million Euro. The U.S. fully supports this program and its direct link to the safety and security of NATO Allies.

19. (U) Action request: The interagency group should examine the existing Department of Homeland Security proposal to commit funds to this project. If a decision on funding has been made by April 23, the U.S. Representative should fully brief the SPS Committee on USG plans.

10. (SBU) Virtual Silk Highway: In the November Committee meeting, PDD briefed on the success of the Central Asia and

Afghanistan Virtual Silk Highway (VSH) projects that bring internet connectivity to key areas. On April 23, PDD will offer an update on VSH Afghanistan, including expansion into Afghan provinces. PDD will also present again a proposal for a one-year, 1.34 million Euro contract extension for VSH Central Asia service provider "VIZADA" to bridge the gap between NATO-supported satellite internet access and a planned EU project to provide fiber optic-based internet access (ref D). The U.S. strongly supports this, not only to ensure continued access for Central Asia, but also because the VIZADA project currently offers increased bandwidth to Afghanistan necessary to support institutional access in Kabul and expansion to the provinces. In late 2008, Italy blocked the approval of the VIZADA extension if cuts to the SPS budget were approved, and pending local funding commitments in Central Asia. The reduced 2009 SPS budget was subsequently approved by all Allies, and 150,000 Euros was pledged by beneficiary countries, however Italy continues to block this project.

¶11. (SBU) Action request: The Science Representative should voice strong support for the extension of this project, noting that it directly supports NATO's priority mission in Afghanistan. If necessary, the Science Representative should expressly note that the NATO Political Committee in May 2008 passed under the silence procedure a document outlining cooperation activities with Afghanistan under the Afghanistan Cooperation Program (ref E) which includes a specific reference to extending "VSH connectivity in Kabul... and in other locations outside Kabul to support access to information and contribute to successful implementation of (the Afghan Cooperation Program) including R&D Capacity-Building."

¶12. (U) Award Recommendations: In December 2008, the U.S. followed instructions and broke silence on a document requesting approval of "Award Recommendations for the SPS Committee Advisory Panel" (ref F). USNATO asked for a review of SPS priorities to "ensure that future projects reflect NATO's overarching goals" and noting that until "Allies agree

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on clear priorities for the Science program, we cannot support projects that we believe fall outside NATO's main goals." The U.S. declined support to two projects, "Flood monitoring and forecasting in a Ukrainian river basin" and "Desertification observatory for environmental and socio-economic sustainability" (ref G and H). PDD informed USNATO on 14 April that the Assistant Secretary General expects to raise this on 23 April under "Any Other Business."

¶13. (U) PDD provided further information on only one of the two projects, the Ukraine Pripyat River project, noting its importance to NATO-Ukraine relations and preparing Ukraine for membership, and its "national priority for Ukraine-NATO SPS cooperation" (ref I). PDD has also noted that this project has received explicit support from Ukraine, Belarus, Slovakia and Norway. The U.S. Mission to NATO remains skeptical about the direct link between this project and NATO's main goals to ensure Alliance security, and the ability to guarantee future funding for this project proposal estimated to cost 250,000-300,000 Euro over the next three-five years.

¶14. (U) Action request: The interagency group should review Pripyat River documents and determine if the project addresses our goals for Science within a NATO context. If not, then no further support should be offered. If determined that it does address U.S. goals, USNATO will contact PDD directly to request this be brought before the full Committee on April 23 for a decision, with the suggestion that if support is offered to this project the full funding for the three-five year project be allocated from the 2009 budget, perhaps from the one million "additional" funds approved by the NAC. This approach

ensures full Committee approval, full project funding, and provides PDD the opportunity to showcase a program, its benefits to NATO, and its importance in terms of public diplomacy. (While we still have not received further information on the second held project, USNATO recommends requesting PDD present this project also to the Committee.)

¶15. (U) NATO-Russia Council SPS Committee Meeting: On April 24, the NRC(SPS) Committee will meet to discuss the Stand-Off Explosives Detection Program, and present and future SPS activities with Russia in Defense Against Terrorism. PDD and Russia are still developing the 2010-2013 NRC(SPS) action plan, however cooperation in 2009 will be discussed at the April 24 meeting. NATO halted cooperation with Russia following Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia. In December, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to a "measured and phased" reengagement with Russia which has been further defined to include only areas in which NATO and Russia share common objectives.

¶16. (U) Action request: The interagency group should define priority areas for scientific cooperation with Russia that address U.S. priorities as well as NATO's main goals. The U.S. should raise this with NATO Allies in the SPS Committee in preparation for the NRC(SPS).
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